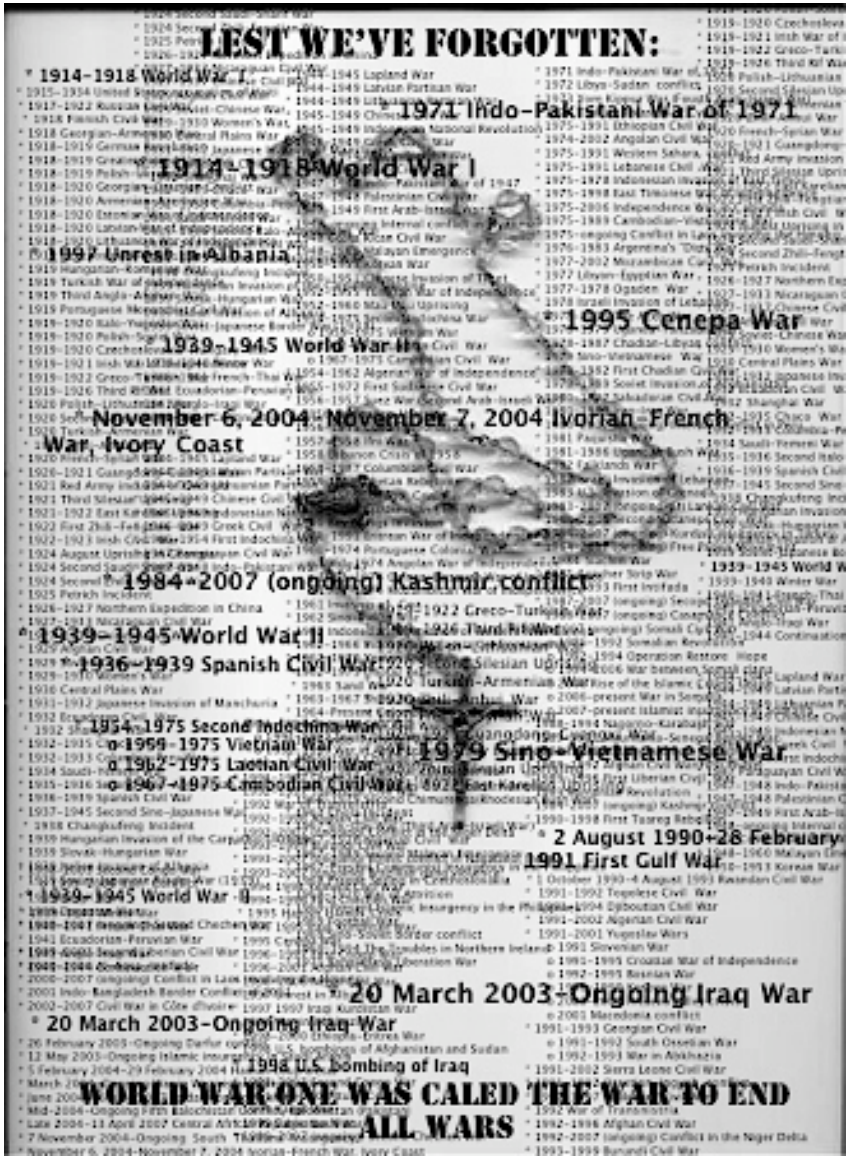
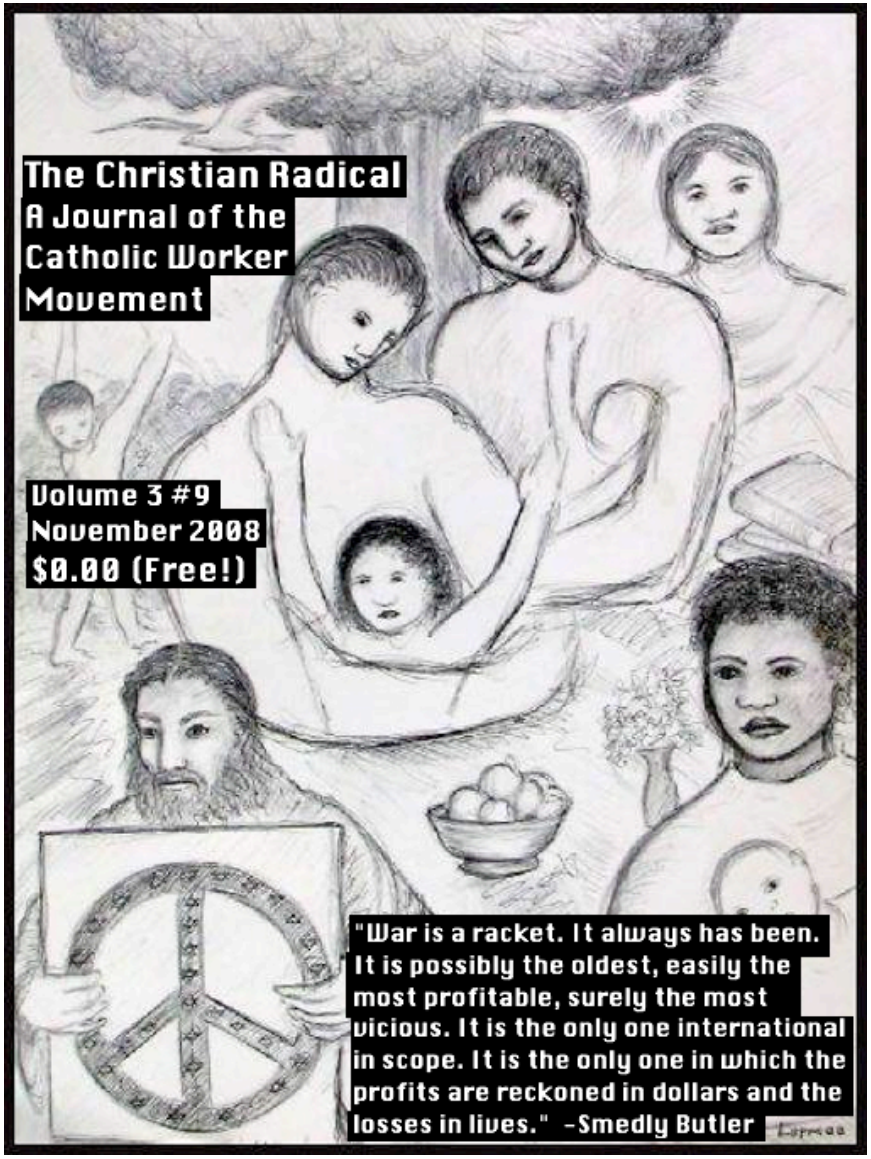

LEST WE'VE FORGOTTEN:
1914-1918 World War I
1971 Indo-Pakistani War of 1971
1914-1918 World War I
1997 Unrest in Albania
1995 Cenepa War
1939-1945 World War II
November 6, 2004-November 7, 2004 Ivorian-French War, Ivory Coast
1984-2007 (ongoing) Kashmir conflict
1939-1945 World War II
1936-1939 Spanish Civil War
1954-1975 Second Indochina War
1959-1975 Vietnam War
1962-1975 Laotian Civil War
1967-1975 Cambodian Civil War
1979 Sino-Vietnamese War
1939-1945 World War II
2 August 1990-28 February 1991 First Gulf War
20 March 2003-Ongoing Iraq War
20 March 2003-Ongoing Iraq War
1998 U.S. bombing of Iraq
WORLD WAR ONE WAS CALED THE WAR TO END ALL WARS


The Christian Radical
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"War is a racket. It always has been. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives." -Smedly Butler

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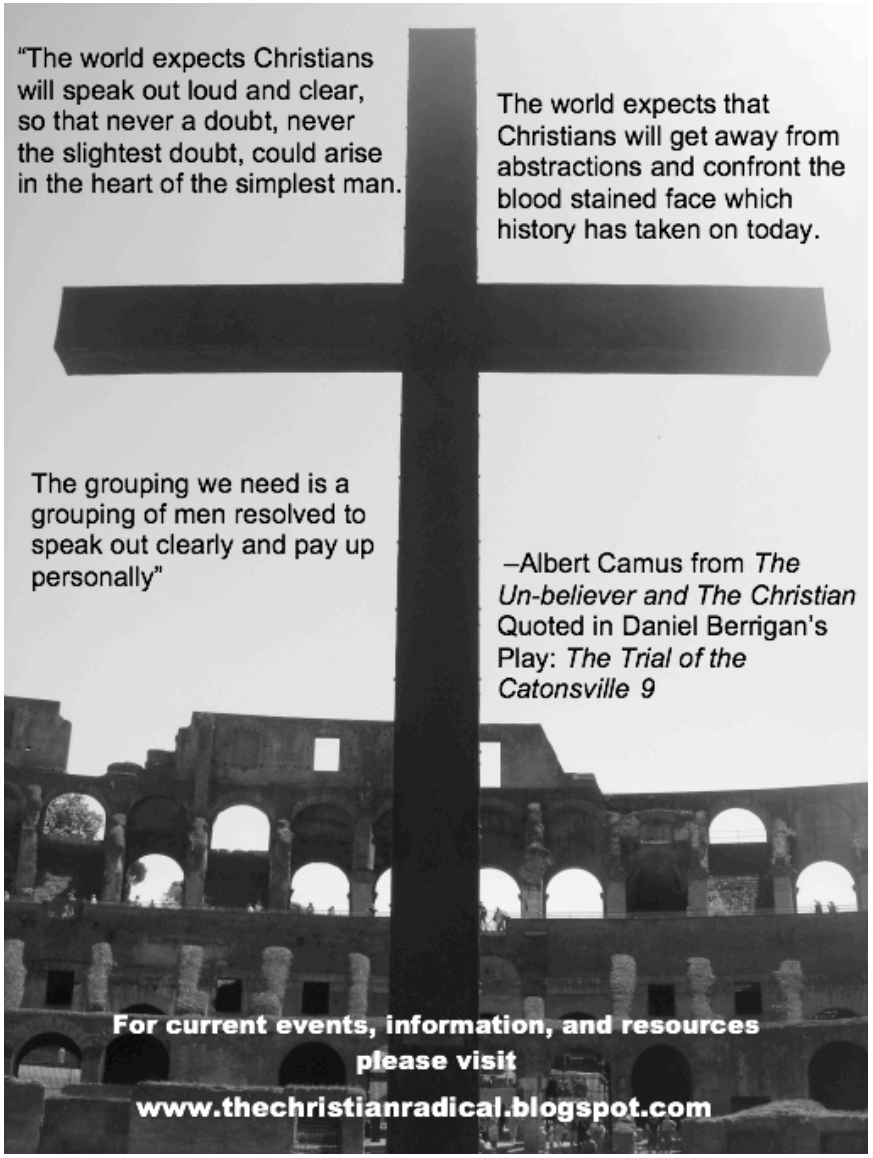

"The world expects Christians will speak out loud and clear, so that never a doubt, never the slightest doubt, could arise in the heart of the simplest man.
The world expects that Christians will get away from abstractions and confront the blood stained face which history has taken on today.
The grouping we need is a grouping of men resolved to speak out clearly and pay up personally"
–Albert Camus from *The Un-believer and The Christian* Quoted in Daniel Berrigan's Play: *The Trial of the Catonsville 9*
For current events, information, and resources please visit
www.thechristianradical.blogspot.com

God Sets Things Right

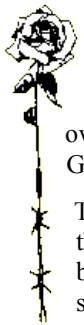
J. Barrett Lee

When I was growing up, I remember feeling like the last kid on my block to learn how to ride a bike. Some of the others were a few years older than me, so they had a head-start. But even the kids my age seemed to catch on a little quicker than I did. They would zoom right by me while I was still teetering along with my handlebars wobbling back and forth. I was so afraid that I might fall and get hurt that I would inevitably fall and get hurt. Then, just as I was about to resign myself to the possibility that I might eventually become the only thirty-year-old with training wheels, my dad would step in, pick me up off the ground and put me back on the bike (which was the last place I wanted to be at that moment). Then we would take off down the road together, with his hand firmly gripping the back of the seat, making sure that I wouldn't fall down. My father was enabling me to do what I couldn't do by myself. More specifically, his hand on the seat of my bicycle was freeing me from being held down by forces (i.e. gravity) that were beyond my control at that time. We, as God's people, are like that kid learning how to ride a bike. God has to keep a hand on our seat and run beside us, otherwise we're sure to fall flat on our face. God is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul uses a certain phrase over and over again to communicate this truth to his readers. The phrase he uses is "the righteousness of God". Now, this is an easy phrase to miss on one's first reading of the text. Our eyes seem to gloss over it rather quickly because it's exactly the kind of flowery language we're used to hearing in church. But I think that if we actually stop and take a deeper look at this particular phrase that we're so used to, we might find that it means much more than we assume it does.

One reason we tend to breeze by this phrase so glibly is that we assume it has nothing to do with us. We use the phrase as a descriptor of the person of God. "God is righteous" is the same as saying "God is love" or "God is holy." We have no objection to the idea in and of itself, but we have a hard time connecting that idea to our lives in the day to day world. Moreover, the word "righteousness" itself doesn't usually have very positive connotations for most of us. I don't know about you, but when I hear the word "righteous", I tend to think of Dana Carvey's character "the Church Lady" from Saturday Night Live. She's stuffy, she's bossy, and she won't rest until everyone else is just as miserable as she is.

I would like to propose that we set aside our assumptions in favor of another understanding of the "righteousness of God." Rather than seeing it as a characteristic internal to the essence of God, let's look at it as a descriptor of the relationship between God and the world. In other words, instead of saying "God is righteous," let's say "God sets things right." Instead of being an abstract concept that dwells in some far-off heavenly realm, God is an active and involved presence in our lives today. God is not to be found on some throne on a cloud somewhere, but can be found in the midst of our daily existence. Where is God? God is right here, "setting things right." God is running beside us, holding onto the seat of the bicycle, freeing us from those forces beyond our control that would otherwise drag us down into disaster. This present reality is what the phrase "righteousness of God" refers to.



A parallel term that St. Paul uses is the word "justify". In Greek, "to be justified" literally means "to be declared righteous" or "to be set right". And, according to St. Paul, there are two kinds of justifying that can happen: Justification by Works (setting things right through our own efforts) and Justification by Faith (setting things right by trusting in God).

The pressure to "make a difference" can feel overwhelming at times for those of us who work or volunteer as caregivers and activists. It's easy to burn out, get cynical, and feel like the problems of this world are big to solve. In spite of our best efforts, wars still continue, people still get sick, the rate of global warming still increases, and the few at the top of the socioeconomic heap still ignore the suffering of the many at the bottom. We feel guilty for all those ways in which we can't even begin to help. I can buy lunch for one person in Vancouver, but what can I do about children in Nigeria who have been orphaned by the AIDS pandemic? Even if I shifted our focus to each new problem as it arises, another need would always pop up behind me, demanding my attention and resources. There's no way I can fix it all!

Every effort of every individual and every program of every institution will eventually fail because we are imperfect and finite creatures. The same holds true for liberals as well as conservatives; Christians as well as atheists; governments and corporations as well as movements and churches. No matter

how good our intentions, how noble our cause, how large our following, how organized our meetings, or how big our budget, we will never be able to keep things from falling apart.

The good news, according to St. Paul, is that it's not our job to keep things from falling apart. "Setting things right" is God's job, not ours. Our job involves two parts: Discernment and Trust. As we become aware of the needs and problems present in the world around us, we should carefully and prayerfully consider these three questions: What are the specific needs in this situation? What are the resources (i.e. time, money, skills) at my/our disposal? What opportunities are available to me/us at this time to bring those needs and resources together? As we answer these questions, we begin to get an idea of how to answer the larger question: What is God calling me/us to do about this situation?

After we have gone through this process (individually or communally), our next responsibility is to release the burden of other needs and problems to the care of God. This is not mere resignation or fatalism. This is a radical faith that empowers us to work diligently in those places of need to which God has called us. We need not fear that our work here might be done in vain. We need not fret over those needs and problems about which we can do little or nothing. Instead, we are able to trust that our work, however imperfect or incomplete, is only one small part of God's work in the world at large. And God, who clothes the flowers of the field, feeds the birds of the air, and counts the hairs on our heads, can be trusted to "set things right."

We can see this kind of trust in God in the lives of prophets and saints throughout history. We can see it in the Hebrew Scriptures as Jeremiah and Elijah proclaimed the word of the Lord against the corrupt monarchs of Israel. We can see it in the New Testament as Jesus and the Apostles announced "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" We can see it in the lives of St. Francis of Assisi and Martin Luther, who challenged the greedy leaders of a church-gone-wrong. We can see it in the examples of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Archbishop Desmond Tutu who protested the racism and injustice of their respective societies. We can see it in the faith of workers and activists all over the world and in our own community who dare to stand up against impossible odds because they believe that nothing can stop the power of a loving, trustworthy God from prevailing over the powers of sin and death in this world.

Solidarity request for Steven Woods

Chris Rooney

It's been a long time since the writings of my friend Steven have shown up here in the zine, Some of you readers might remember him, others not. Steven is a spirited opponent of capital punishment, his wit, insight, and crass "you'll never take me alive" attitude to being incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay-like conditions garnered him a small following (at least that I'm aware of). There was a time where his monthly column was the most regular feature of this periodical. Written by hand from Death Row in Texas and transcribed by friends before being sent to Karl and I it was his hand reaching through the bars and into the hearts and thoughts of the people who read him. I have never yet met the man in person but I'm honoured to count him as my friend.

Steven had to stop writing last summer when the State of Texas put his best friend, Brian Knight to death. I can still remember the last two articles of his I published, one was written from the part of the prison where they send the condemned in the days or weeks before they are killed, and the last was from his regular cell again with him trying to sort it out and make some sense of Brian's execution.

I published a couple of his poems after that while trying to figure out what to do, what to say to you the readers about what Steven was dealing with and what to say to him to encourage him to continue to write. He finally told me that he needed time to sort himself out and that he just couldn't write any more. I was given to understand that he felt totally alone, the one person who had made his transition from his old life to Death Row was now dead guilty or innocent in life it no longer made a difference he'd been snuffed out and Steven has had to cope with that all the while feeling the weight of his own mortality hanging over his head.

He has been through an appeals process which has failed him and he hasn't had the sort of outside support that he used to enjoy. I'm partially to blame for this. I don't write letters, it's not that I'm physically incapable of it it's just that something or other always gets in the way and I'm left with either e-mail or phone calls and neither of those work with him.

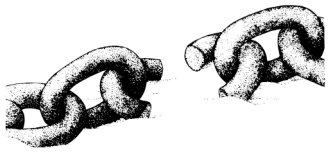
I have tried to steer other people towards him, tried to encourage other people to send him letters of support and have had mixed success. One thing he always lamented when I did hear from him was that few people ever responded to his writing, perhaps my letter writing problem is not unique.

I have tried in the past to assure him that he is not alone, that there are lots of people who have been moved by his words and who yearn for a halt to the death penalty in the US and around the world but when change is slow to come and you're waiting to die it's easy to feel like nothing is happening. This is one of the reasons for this appeal. I want to ask you the readers of this zine to do something either write to or visit Steven Woods, or start writing to or visiting another prisoner. You can do this any number of ways. I'm including Steven's contact info below as well as the web addresses for Books to Prisoners, Amnesty International, The Anarchist Black Cross and what ever else I find when I Google after I've stopped writing this.

Mostly I want to do this for Steven, because I can say with certainty that his words did change one heart, mine, he's my friend and I almost never hear from him. I worry for his mental, spiritual, and physical health and wellbeing. I imagine what I would be going through were I in his place and I shudder at the thought.

I miss Steven and I want him to know that he is missed too, I want him to have the courage to face down all the adversity he is living under and to find the freedom which makes prison irrelevant, and I want him to hear about it from more than just myself.

If you can please write to
Steven Woods #999427
Polunsky Unit 3872 FM
350 S Livingston, TX 77351.



If you can't please consider becoming involved with or showing solidarity for these groups:

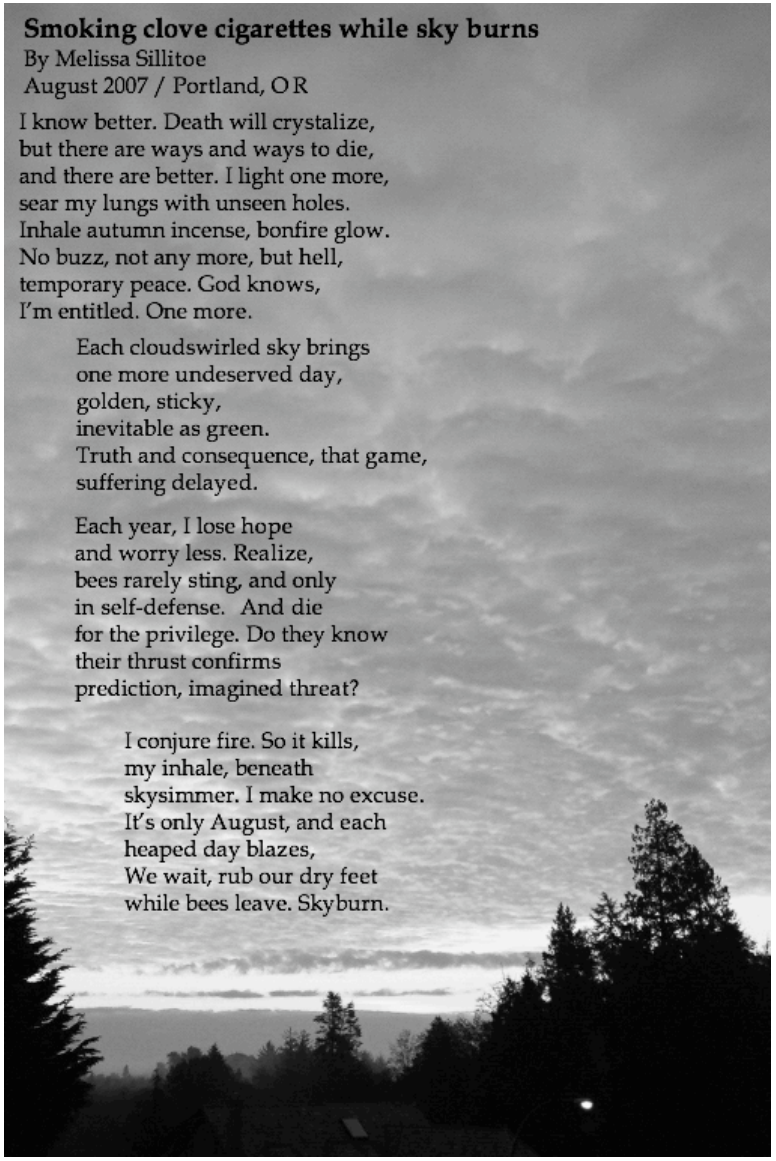
Books to Prisoners
http://www.prisonjustice.ca/organizations/b2p.html

Amnesty International
http://www.amnesty.org/

Anarchist Black Cross Federation
http://www.abcf.net/

Texas Moratorium Network
http://www.texasmoratorium.org/

Starting this month we are going to be re-printing Steven's articles. ✻


Smoking clove cigarettes while sky burns
By Melissa Sillitoe
August 2007 / Portland, OR
I know better. Death will crystalize,
but there are ways and ways to die,
and there are better. I light one more,
sear my lungs with unseen holes.
Inhale autumn incense, bonfire glow.
No buzz, not any more, but hell,
temporary peace. God knows,
I'm entitled. One more.
Each cloudswirled sky brings
one more undeserved day,
golden, sticky,
inevitable as green.
Truth and consequence, that game,
suffering delayed.
Each year, I lose hope
and worry less. Realize,
bees rarely sting, and only
in self-defense. And die
for the privilege. Do they know
their thrust confirms
prediction, imagined threat?
I conjure fire. So it kills,
my inhale, beneath
skysimmer. I make no excuse.
It's only August, and each
heaped day blazes,
We wait, rub our dry feet
while bees leave. Skyburn.

The Redemptive Power of Music

A. Joseph Iwasa

I am a recovering musician. I got my first guitar when I was 12, and played on and off until I was 17 and bought a four string electric bass. The failed guitarist turned bassist, I knew the vacuum all to well of that avoided position in a band, after singing for a metalcore and a death metal band.

I first got into hardcore and metal as an outlet of frustrations. I was also initially mostly into bands from northeast Ohio such as the Spudmonsters, Ringworm and Integrity, where I lived at the time, excited by the fact that they were just as good if not better than the national and international acts that were so much more popular. Plus I had a step cousin who played guitar in Face Value.

My first metal show was Rollins Band, Helmet and Sausage, in Seattle, WA in 1994. I was 14 years old, and pretty much sold on the genre by then. I went to my first local show in January the next year, at a bowling alley called the Redeye Rock Club, in North Royalton, OH. I went to see a hardcore band, Procrustus, and caught a death metal band Infested. I actually had a foot print on me from falling in the pit during Infested, and this set the tone for years of dancing to vent frustrations at shows.

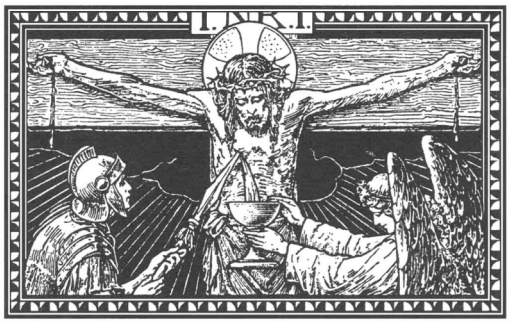
My first band was a metalcore band called Rancor. No, not THE Rancor from Pennsylvania or Germany. We started as a garage band in Parma, OH in 1995, cut two demos, only one of which was released, "No Time For Religion" in 1995, and played one show in Cleveland's Flats at the old Peabody's Downunder in May 1996. We also appeared on a Gogmagod Records compilation, Gogmacomp II, under the name Baptized in Excrement, with a song from our second demo, "Evil Thoughts."

My other bands were never much more successful, though if it wasn't for having the hardcore, punk and metal scenes to vent my frustrations, I'm not exactly sure if I'd be alive right now. From January 1995-January 2000, for all intents and purposes, the scene was my life. Things came crashing to an end for me the day I quit my last metal band, Netherborn.

I'd reached a point in my life where I felt it was no longer acceptable to complain about alienation, misery and the state of the world, things had to change. I tried to shift the band's message, making all of the songs I wrote lyrics for about things like how it's bad to drink and drive, and about how pollution was killing the earth. I started talking at a show about the School of the Americas (SOA) and got into a shouting match with a number of people in the crowd. Later a band-mate and out guitar tech confronted me about it, and it was the beginning of the end. I started a 'zine, "Outlet," and instead of talking about the SOA, I distributed it at our next two shows.

But it was too little too late. When a subculture does nothing but re-create the same forms of oppression and exploitation of the larger culture, it has negated its point. The fighting, racism, sexism, and elitism in the scene all became too much for me, and I dropped out of musicianship. I had also converted to Christianity, and no one I knew for the scene was supporting me in the ways I was trying to change personally, except some straight edge youth who supported my abstaining from drugs, alcohol and sex. But that was a tiny minority.

I've had peripheral involvement in music as a fan since then, but seeing the struggle against injustice as being key, I've tried to stick with politically right on bands. I firmly believe in the Leninist principle that all forms of organization are inherently political, including bands. Even if they claim to be apolitical, generally that means compromise with the status quo. And we all know what that means in America! ✵



I'll Not Go Quietly

Steven Woods

Morning. A few thoughts? Sure why not? Check this out....

You're sitting there at a vegetarian kiosk in Northern California. You've spent the last several weeks squatting, hitch hiking, protesting, kicking it with some good, free thinking people. You're taking a small break, heading down to San Francisco to see what's up with the city life before getting back into the forest to continue the fight against the logging industry. An old friend is there, and you reminisce about some old people in an old place.

All of a sudden, you're approached by a police officer. They know your name, and it un-nerves you. So you give them a false one. They check your tattoos. The three roses, and vibrant green vines trailing down your arm glues up the game. You're placed in handcuffs, driven to a gulag, and subjected to varius indignities before being locked into a small concrete box with nothing but a steel slab attached to the wall and a busted toilet.

Despite the various colored activities of your past, this is the first time in a cell. You're cold, you're confused, you're afraid. You've been using some pretty strong mind-altering substances for quite a while now, and you're not really sure what's happening. If any of this is even real. And no one has even told you why you're there.

After a while you adjust, a bit dazed, and then they finally tell you what they think you did. They tell you you've killed two of your friends, they are going to seek the death penalty. They say you committed the crime in Texas, and they are going to ship you back. You have to wait because some psychopath just took out the world trade center.

You know you've never killed anyone in Texas, but it doesn't matter. You're shipped back like human cattle trussed up and herded through the airport by a phalanx of soldiers. You're still pretty much in shock. What can you do? You go to stand trial, forced to put your trust in a system you've been told all along works. You KNOW it doesn't, but this doesn't matter either. You have no choice You're a transient, a bum, broke, no one to turn to.

You're stuck with legal representation who aren't paid enough to care about you or your case. They barely work on it at all, no investigation, they don't do much with witnesses on the stand. So it's really no surprise....at least it shouldn't be..when eventually you're convicted. More "guidance" is presented by the state. You're a social miscreant (anarchist). you have no redeeming qualities. Your attorneys call no witnesses to refute this. Twelve of your peers deem you unfit to live. You are sentenced to death in front of an entire nation.

Afterwards, you are transferred to prison to wait several years for an ax to finally fall. Not a normal prison. You're sent to a super segregation facility. Placed into solitary confinement, isolated from the rest of humanity for the rest of your life. You are still in shock. The situation hasn't quite registered yet.

And then it does.

You've spent the last several months degraded, harassed, oppressed, provoked, trampled upon...Life becomes 23 hours in a concrete tomb. The bite of the handcuffs on your wrists every time you leave it. Meals unfit for human consumption. The glass that will eternally separate you from your loved ones. They've taken everything, they want what's left. Your humanity and your life. But you've decided you're not going to give them the first, and you're going to make them TAKE the second. In the end you are given two choices:

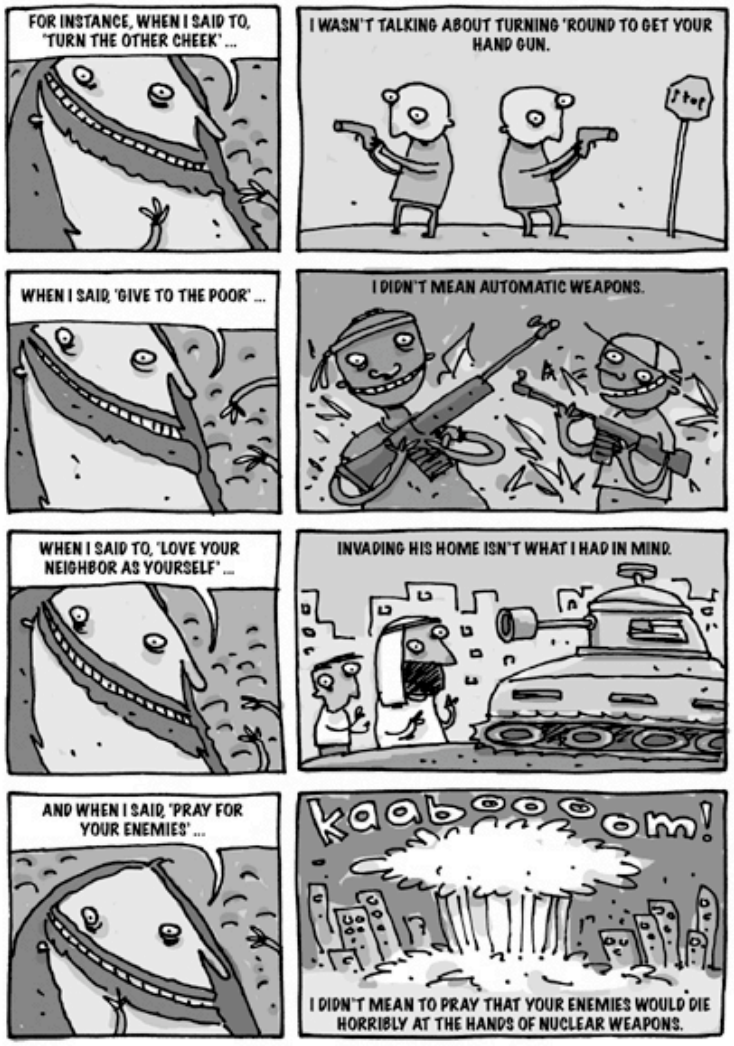
You can sit on your bunk and accept it.
Or you can fight back with everything you have.
But given who you are. There really is only one choice.

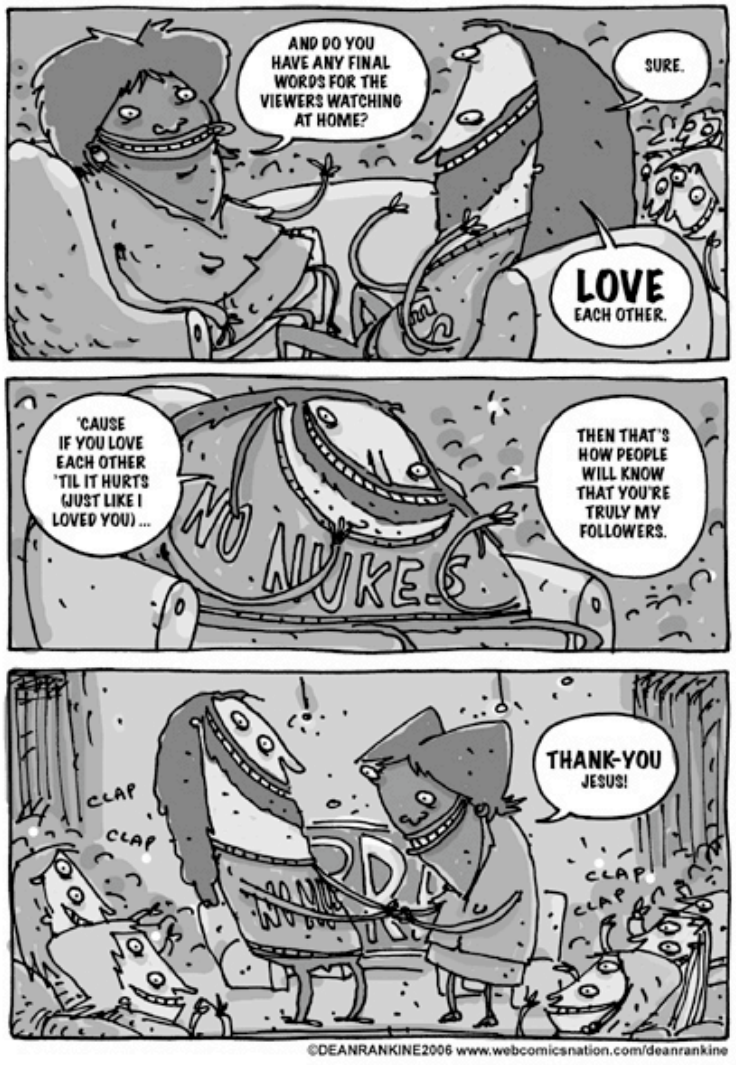
You FIGHT!

Ahh... I've been called to go to recreation from one cage to another.
I'll leave you for now.

In Solidarity,
Steven Woods
Polunsky Death Camp ✠

JESUS MEETS OPRAH
MY NEXT GUEST'S SACRIFICIAL LIFE HAS INFLUENCED MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ACROSS THE GLOBE AND HIS BOOK HAS TOPPED THE NEW YORK BEST SELLER LIST.
CLAP CLAP
CLAP
PLEASE WELCOME ... JESUS CHRIST!
JESUS, YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE YOU FEEL YOU'VE BEEN MIS-UNDERSTOOD.
THAT'S RIGHT, OPRAH. I FEEL SOME OF MY TEACHING HAS BEEN TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT AND I WANT TO CLARIFY A COUPLE OF POINTS.


FOR INSTANCE, WHEN I SAID TO, 'TURN THE OTHER CHEEK' ...
I WASN'T TALKING ABOUT TURNING 'ROUND TO GET YOUR HAND GUN.
STOP
WHEN I SAID, 'GIVE TO THE POOR' ...
I DIDN'T MEAN AUTOMATIC WEAPONS.
WHEN I SAID TO, 'LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF' ...
INVADING HIS HOME ISN'T WHAT I HAD IN MIND.
AND WHEN I SAID, 'PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMIES' ...
kaaboooooom!
I DIDN'T MEAN TO PRAY THAT YOUR ENEMIES WOULD DIE HORRIBLY AT THE HANDS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS.


AND DO YOU HAVE ANY FINAL WORDS FOR THE VIEWERS WATCHING AT HOME?
SURE.
LOVE EACH OTHER.
'CAUSE IF YOU LOVE EACH OTHER 'TIL IT HURTS (JUST LIKE I LOVED YOU) ...
NO NUKES
THEN THAT'S HOW PEOPLE WILL KNOW THAT YOU'RE TRULY MY FOLLOWERS.
CLAP
CLAP
THANK-YOU JESUS!
CLAP
CLAP
©DEANRANKINE2006 www.webcomicsnation.com/deanrankine

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- Link to, and visit our blog **www.thechristianradical.blogspot.com** that's where the new online versions get posted each month and it's where you can read news and opinion pieces that don't get published in the zine itself. You can also sign up to receive the online edition in your inbox by writing to **the.christian.radical@gmail.com**

- Show your support by writing an article or sending us some original photography or artwork. The deadline is always the 21st of the month; send your work along with a *very* short bio (40 words or less) to **the.christian.radical.zine@gmail.com**

- Help us print this thing! We're tired of groups who seem more interested in cash money than grass roots participation, that's why we're ad free and don't ask for money. This zine is paid for by the people who print it wherever it's found. If you would like to help with printing it write to the address above and ask us, we'll happily add you to our list of printers.

- If you *really* want to give some money to someone please send your cash to the Vancouver Catholic Worker or a Catholic Worker community in your area. For a list of Catholic Worker communities world wide visit **www.catholicworker.org** or send your money to:

The Vancouver Catholic Worker
1143 East Pender Street
Vancouver BC Canada V6A 1W6

Thanks for reading and thanks for all of your continued support.

Chris Rooney
Karl Germyn
Editors, The Christian Radical.

A Blanket

Brian Depew

October 2 2008

In an article over at Daily Yonder last week I read this:

Last Christmas, a little 9 year old girl at Dixie Elementary, a small, rural school in the Appalachian coalfields of West Virginia, was asked what she wanted for Christmas. Instead of the expected response of an MP3 player, a Hannah Montana doll, video game or skateboard, the little girl asked for a blanket. All she wanted for Christmas was a blanket for herself and her little sister to keep them warm while they slept, one on each end the couch. The girls were keeping warm by covering themselves up with their coats at night.

Normally such an outrage solicits an angry response from me. Anger at the policy, politicians and citizens of this country that allow such tragic conditions like this to exist in our own backyard.

Instead, I was reminded of a defining moment in my life. I was in my first year of college at a small liberal arts college just south of Des Moines, Iowa. As part of my involvement with a progressive student organization on campus, I had the opportunity to help cook a meal to be served at the Catholic Worker House in Des Moines.

Five days each week the Des Moines Catholic Workers serve an evening meal to anyone shows up at their house. Most of the time they cook the meal for 30 or more people themselves, but occasionally another group provides a relief from the cooking duties. That's what we were doing that night.

In addition to serving five meals each week, the Catholic Worker House provides some laundry service, showers, a telephone for use, and keeps a few items on hand to give away to those most in need. Their space is limited though, so they have very few items on hand to give out.

After dinner that night a man in his late 50s or 60s showed up at the door. Just as one of the house residents was beginning to apologize that dinner had already been served, he waived is hand to indicate that was not why he had come. He wanted to know if they had any blankets.

It was about this time of year -- in the fall just as the nights are beginning to turn chilly as the temperature drops nearer to frost with each passing day. Our friend at the door was very clearly homeless, and, I garnered, with only the clothes on his back.

The house resident who greeted the man disappeared into the basement saying that he would check, noting he didn't think they had much. He returned just moments later and extended an old, tattered and thin blanket, "This is all we have."

I try to give a lot of things I don't need away to Goodwill or second hand stores. But if I had had this blanket, I almost certainly would have thrown it away, concluding I would never find a home for such a worn piece of cloth.

Reaching out to accept the blanket, the look on the face of the man at the door was one of the most deeply and truly appreciative looks I have ever seen in my life. Through his weathered, creased and hard face his eyes showed a bit of simple joy. When the temperature did drop to freezing that night, he had a blanket to wrap himself in.

I didn't grow up rich, or ignorant for that matter. I knew even before this that there was poverty in the world. But the expression on that gentleman's face as he reached out for the blanket is seared forever on my mind.

The look in his eyes helped define my life since then, and I still think frequently about this nameless man who taught me a great deal in a very short time. Not only does poverty exist in this world, it is exists in your backyard and in mine, and much of it is so severe that a blanket, even a tattered one, can change a life.

You, me, our politicians and our policies created these two stories, and we can create different, new stories. To quote a great president, "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little." ✣

Ammon Hennacy: 'Non-Church' Christian

Dorothy Day

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One of the great things that Ammon did for the Catholic Worker back in the thirties (we began publishing in 1933) was to increase our ecumenical spirit. There was not much talk of ecumenism in those days in the Holy Roman Catholic Church. His association with us began in the city of Milwaukee where he was living at that time and where we had a house of hospitality. Communists, socialists, anarchists, and an assortment of unbelievers and Protestants, of who knew what denomination, used to come to our Friday night meetings. The discussions were lively. It was not long after the Spanish Civil War and some of our friends had served in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. The discussions were mostly on social questions. The group in New York and other centers where we had houses were going in strong for the liturgy then, and lauds and complines were recited in many of our houses. A cardinal once asked me some years later, "What do they think they are, that Catholic Worker crowd -- a bunch of nuns and priests?" The separation between the clergy and the laity was pretty distinct. It was considered remarkable that we lay people were living what is called dedicated lives of voluntary poverty, working without salary and serving our brother Christ in the poor, "inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of my brothers, you have done it unto me."

In New York there were complaints among the staff that they never knew whether I was quoting the Douay version of the scriptures, or the King James version. (Now there are a half dozen English translations.) When we started to publish Ammon Hennacy's articles, "Life at Hard Labor" in The Catholic Worker, and he made slighting remarks about Holy Mother Church, there were adverse comments among the staff and also more severe criticism from some of our readers. It was in vain that we pointed him out as the most ascetic, the most hard-working, the most devoted to the poor and the oppressed of any we had met, and that his life and his articles put us on the spot. He was an inspiration and a reproach.

Before he came to New York to join us on the staff of the Catholic Worker, while he was still working at farm labor, he introduced us to the Molokans, the

Doukhobors, the Hutterites, and many another sect which had come to this country to escape war and conscription in their own countries. When he came to live with us he began to attend the meetings of the War Resisters League, meetings at Community Church, at Methodist churches, and with Jewish, Episcopalian, and other war resisters. He was interested, in fact, in all religious points of view if they resulted in a real effort to conform one's life to one's profession of faith. He still spoke contemptuously of Jesus-shouters and religious demagogues who blessed the state of war, and he stated unequivocally that he did not like St. Paul, and that St. Peter had betrayed Christ again when he said, "Servants, obey your masters." He didn't see the point of St. Paul sending Onesimus back to his master, in the hopes that the master would be converted so that there would be "neither slave nor free."

Obedience, of course, was a bad word. Authority was a bad word. In vain I pointed out to him that when the retired army major for whom he worked in Arizona told him to do a particular job, he did it, and he did it as he was told to. He admired the army officer because he knew farming. And he cooperated with Ammon in paying him by the day and thus evading the federal income tax which the tax man was trying to collect from Ammon.

I pointed out that he accepted the authority of those who were authorities, and knew what they were doing, and how to do it. He admired the courage of the major who subdued a bull which was wild with the pain of a snake bite, and had the courage to handle him with confidence and without fear. But he continued to balk, Ammon did, at the words authority and obedience.

On his coming to New York in the late forties, he attended a "retreat" at Maryfarm at Newburgh on the Hudson which Fr. Marion Casey of Minnesota gave. During the Mass each morning he knelt on the hard floor next to a Greenwich Villager by the name of Kenneth Little. He died some years ago and I always remember him with gratitude (not only for the gardening he did with us but for those retreat days with Ammon). Kenneth knelt next to him and kept pointing out to him the words in the Mass that had to do with peace.

"Mercifully give PEACE in our days. The PEACE of the Lord be always with you. Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, grant us PEACE. Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your apostles: PEACE I leave with you, my PEACE I give to you, be pleased to grant to your Church PEACE and unity according to your will."

Poor Kenneth, he did so want to assure Ammon that the Church, indeed, did desire peace, but I am afraid that neither Ammon nor I could forget how the scrap iron and metal was heaped in the church yards during the Second World War and blessed by the priests, and war stamps sold to the children, and bombers named after the Blessed Mother, and so on. It was still all too much like rival armies in Mexico carrying banners with representations of the Blessed Virgin of different localities to bless their wars.

Ammon knew much labor history but very little about Church history. He could get no encouragement from the fact that in ages past there had been far greater scandals of wealth and warfare than even today. Or, were there? One priest said, of Ammon's anticlericalism, that, perhaps, he saw the sins of the Church as a human institution far more clearly than we did. Another priest said of Ammon that he had received so great a light during that first jail sentence of his in Atlanta Penitentiary, that it had blinded him. He had read through the Bible nine times and all but memorized the Sermon on the Mount. When he came out he had become a Bible Christian, not in the sense of a sect, but of one who accepted the WORD. He read the Tolstoi who wrote Anna Karenina, and his faith deepened. In that great novel Levin struggled and fought for a faith. He went through such agony that he was on the verge of suicide (like the Maritains before their conversion) because he felt he could not believe as his wife Kitty and as the serfs around him did. There is a triumphant note of joy in the end of Levin's struggle which warms the heart. It was not the bitter, later Tolstoi, who derided religion in the novel Resurrection, who could not separate the wheat from the chaff.

For a time Ammon was a Catholic. It was before the aggiornamento, and though he had been christened a Baptist, a valid baptism, he was conditionally baptized again by Fr. Marion Casey in Minnesota. His instruction had been slight in spite of retreats and conferences which we were in the habit of having at the Newburgh farm. He assented to what he agreed with, had no mind for philosophy or theology, and he no longer read the Scriptures. "I read them nine times in jail," he said on a number of occasions. And once, flippantly, "If I had only a telephone book I would have read that nine times." Just as he said later

on, "If Dorothy had been a Methodist, I would have become a Methodist." These were wounding words. I could never understand them.

He was with us -- how many years? Long enough to make an impression on that great pagan city of New York.

He had already, while living on the outskirts of Phoenix, Arizona, made an impression on that city with his picketing, as well as on the few local Communists who lived there. I taunted him. "You'll not make the impression on New York that you did in Phoenix. Those Republicans like to show how liberal they are in having a pet anarchist confronting them on their streets every Sunday and legal holiday."

But he did make an impression, and when I traveled on my own pilgrimage around the country I met hundreds (of course, there were thousands), who had encountered him when they, themselves, had visited New York.

Which brings me again to Ammon's life of hard work and voluntary poverty. In those two aspects he outshone everyone. There were a few hall bedrooms in the old Chrystie Street house and Ammon had one of them most of the time, though he never hesitated to give up the room to guests. That was one of the reasons he had it, because he could be trusted to relinquish it immediately. He claimed nothing as his own, nothing but the clothes on his back, and when he gave up his bed, he slept on the floor in the big living room where we had our meetings. He slept side by side with all the Bowery men whom Roger O'Neill brought in on cold winter nights.

He went to Mass early every morning and kept a list of all who had asked his prayers in the front of his missal which he read over after Communion. After Mass he went to the post office for mail, opened it, entered any donations in a big cash book, answered every note or letter in a short and almost illegible script, sent out papers, and by noon was ready to take his stand on the streets to sell the CW. He had a regular route. I cannot remember without consulting old papers exactly how it went, but this will give an idea of it. Mondays, Wall Street; Tuesdays, Lexington Avenue and 43rd Street; Wednesdays, Fordham University gates; Thursdays, New York University, and so on.

Evenings it was the same: Cooper Union on the nights they had lectures, the New School, and any radical meetings which were taking place around the city. He was there rain or snow, with anyone who would accompany him, selling the paper. Often conversations would last into the night at some coffee shop. He sold the papers and so always had a pocket-full of pennies or silver to buy extra food or an occasional book, to feed others, or go to some movie with social significance. He used to say that Wall Street clientele gave pennies, and charitable ladies in the shopping centers gave dimes and quarters.

Peter Maurin quoted Cardinal Newman: "If you wish to reach the man in the street, go to the man in the street." The War Resisters have a motto, "Wars will cease when men refuse to fight." Ammon went directly to people and persevered in friendship with them though he soon realized that they were not going to go very far in building up a new society. In spite of his critical attitude he had a great warmth and loved to be with people and made them feel his closeness to them. I would not say he ever despaired or felt hopeless. He could not have gone on if he did. Part of his love for people came from his great inner loneliness -- there were so few to work for the nonviolent revolution, so few ready to sacrifice all for it.

Of course, Ammon was a romantic Irishman, basically, and never lost that sense of drama, that love of life, tragic though its outcome so often was. He literally would have liked to give his life for the obliteration of wars and all injustice from the face of the earth. He would have welcomed being shot as Joe Hill was, that labor martyr after whom he named his House of Hospitality in Salt Lake City. But Ammon's death was a triumph just the same. His first heart attack came to him on the picket line on his way to the Federal Court building in Salt Lake City. He died suddenly a week later, when his friends thought he was on the way to recovery.

He died in protesting the execution of two of the least of God's children who had been justly sentenced, as the Mormons thought (believing as they did in the shedding of blood to atone for the shedding of blood).

I have said that Ammon was a romantic and once he said to me, "I do not remember the time that I was not in love with some woman." Believing as I do that being "in love" is a reflection of the love God has for each and every one of

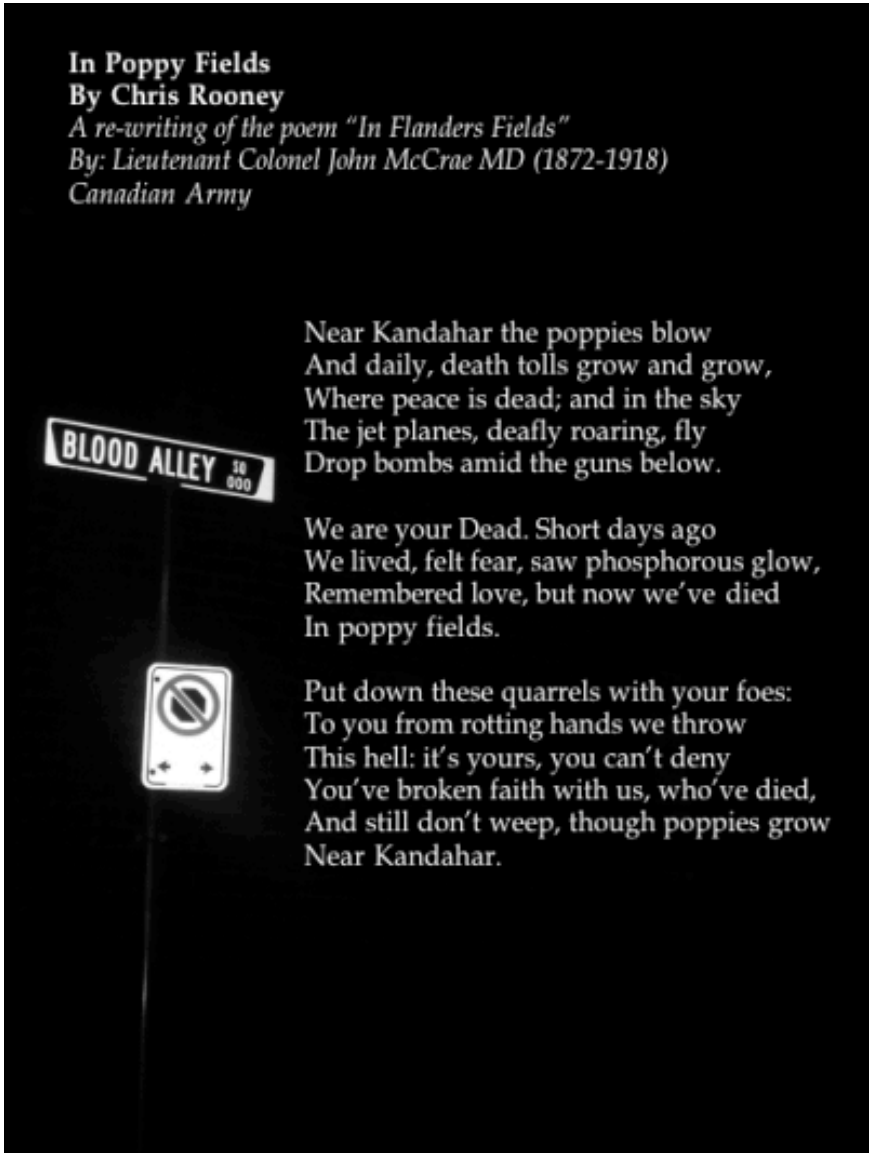
us, I am glad that this kind of love illumined the last seven years of Ammon's life.

Ammon had long ceased attending Mass, though on his travels, as his wife states, he went to Mass with her and even received Communion. But, "in peace was his bitterness most bitter." He rejected the "institutional church," even while he received the Sacrament. The monks at the Holy Trinity monastery with whom he was friends never questioned him, nor would I. Who can understand another, who can read another's heart?

I do not think that Ammon expected to die, since all felt he was on the way to recovery, so there was no question of his preparing for death in the way of confession or asking for the last rites, or the sacrament of the sick, as this sacrament is now called. In fact, I am not sure if Ammon knew what the sacraments were, or what they were all about, that they were channels of grace. If they had been explained I am sure he would have considered that grace had already been poured out upon him abundantly in the sufferings he had endured in jail. God's ways are not our ways.

One of Ammon's favorite quotations from Scripture was, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." And he used it in relation to judges who sat as Judge Julius Hoffman has been sitting all these long months in the Chicago 7 trial.

But I must admit that Ammon was a great one to judge when it came to priests and bishops, and his words were coarse on many an occasion, so that it was hurtful to me to hear him, loving the Church as I do. But there's that love-hate business in all of us, and Ammon wanted so much to see priests and bishops and popes stand out strong and courageous against the sin and the horrors and the cruelty of the powers of this world. But we cannot judge him, knowing so well his own strong and courageous will to fight the corruption of the world around him. ✠


In Poppy Fields
By Chris Rooney
A re-writing of the poem "In Flanders Fields"
By: Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae MD (1872-1918)
Canadian Army
BLOOD ALLEY
Near Kandahar the poppies blow
And daily, death tolls grow and grow,
Where peace is dead; and in the sky
The jet planes, deafly roaring, fly
Drop bombs amid the guns below.
We are your Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt fear, saw phosphorous glow,
Remembered love, but now we've died
In poppy fields.
Put down these quarrels with your foes:
To you from rotting hands we throw
This hell: it's yours, you can't deny
You've broken faith with us, who've died,
And still don't weep, though poppies grow
Near Kandahar.

We Believe So We Speak

2nd Corinthians 4:13

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